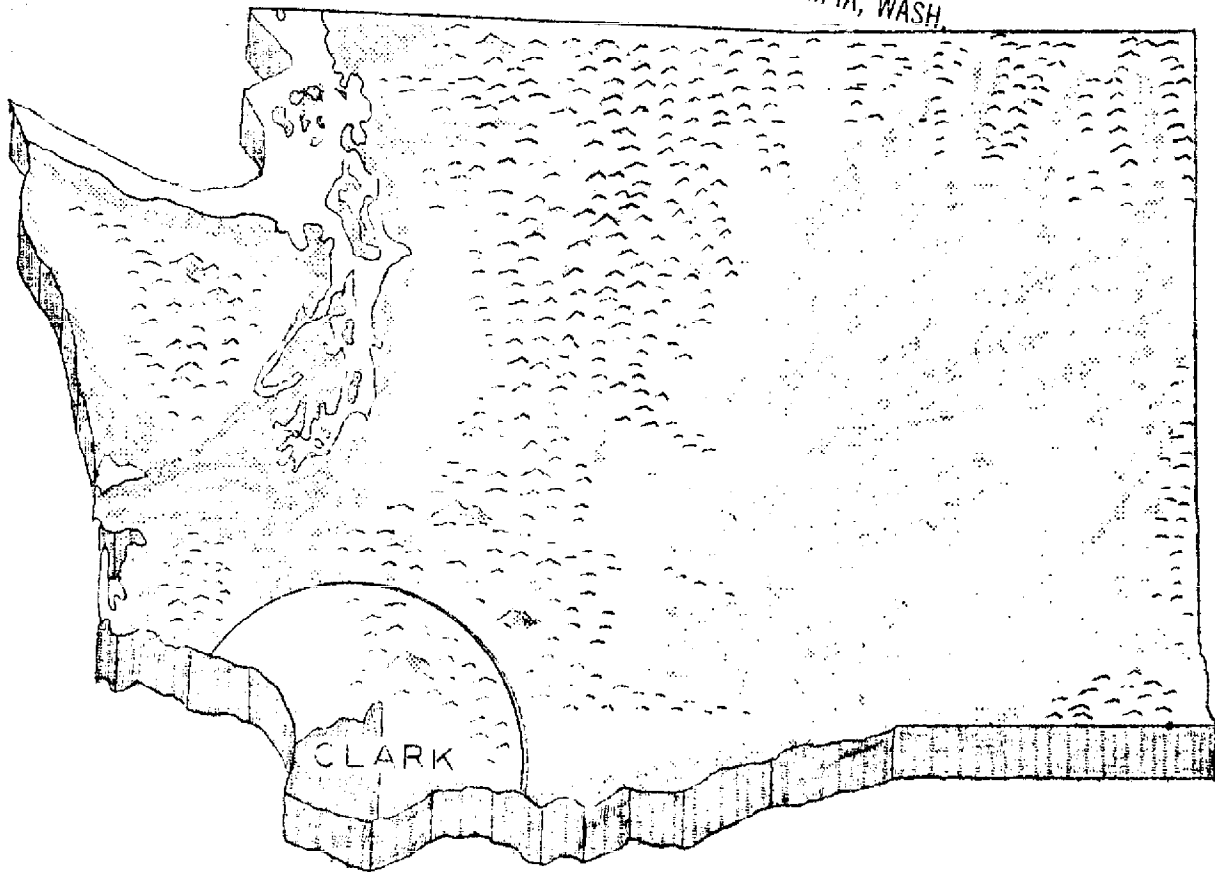


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CLARK COUNTY AGRICULTURE

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Joseph D. Dwyer, Director

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Agricultural Marketing Service
S. R. Newell

WASHINGTON CROP AND LIVESTOCK REPORTING SERVICE
348 Federal Office Building
Seattle 4, Washington

FOREWORD

This book on Clark County is one of an original series being devoted to the history and present nature of agriculture in each of the thirty-nine counties of the State of Washington. This project was initiated in 1956 through funds made available by Sverre W. Omdahl, Director, Washington State Department of Agriculture, 1948-56. State funds were matched by moneys from the United States Department of Agriculture under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946.

County agricultural data books are intended to serve a variety of needs. Continually changing conditions in a dynamic state such as Washington require constant planning by groups and individuals both in private enterprise and public service. Comprehensive knowledge of land resources, population and agricultural-economic trends in a local area such as Clark County is of great value. This book will be useful for reference in public and private instruction by vocational agriculture and social studies teachers in Clark County schools. It has been devised also to inform adults interested in knowing more about their immediate area, as well as persons and enterprises concerned with agricultural production and marketing or prospective settlement and investment in the county.

Carefully selected geographic facts, agricultural history, population trends and statistical data are included to give an over-all appreciation of Clark County. The enumerations of the United States Censuses of Population and Agriculture since 1850 and recent estimates of the Washington State Census Board are summarized to give a perspective of development since the establishment of Clark County in 1844. Facts on topography, soil, climate and forests which influence farming are integrated from surveys and reports of government agencies. Estimates of leading crops by years since 1939 by the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service provide a measure of the trend in the agriculture of the county farm industry.

Acknowledgment is accorded the professional work of several persons. Immediate direction was under Emery C. Wilcox, Agricultural Statistician in Charge, Estimates Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Supervision, research and cartographic illustration was performed by Dr. Woodrow R. Clevinger, Market Analyst, Washington State Department of Agriculture. Mr. Richard Perry, of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and Leonard W. Orvold, D. W. Barrowman and Christian A. Stokstad, Agricultural Statisticians, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture, gave valuable assistance. Vladimir Kovalik, University of Washington graduate student in geography, compiled most of the statistical tables and graphs. The clerical staff of the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service prepared tabular material for the book.

Joseph D. Dwyer, Director
Washington State Department of Agriculture

Olympia, Washington
April 1, 1957

Funds for this bulletin provided by the Washington State Department of Agriculture were matched by the United States Department of Agriculture under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946.

PART I

History of Clark County Agriculture

Introduction

Clark County, with its lower Columbia River bottom and benchlands and forested Cascade foothills, is located on the border of southwestern Washington. The land area is 633 square miles (approximately 405,120 acres) and Clark is one of the smaller Washington counties, ranking 34th among the 39 counties. Vancouver, with a population of 41,950, is the fifth largest city in the state and is the county seat. The total population is 85,300, ranking sixth among Washington counties.

Clark is noted as the leading western Washington orchard growing area and as a county with a well-diversified livestock, poultry and field crop type of agriculture. The pattern of farming is greatly influenced by part-time farming and its proximity to the Portland urban area. In production of plums and prunes, Clark County is second in the state and 32nd in the nation. It also has ranked among the first ten counties of the state in production of cherries, pears, dairy products and turkeys according to recent census. Clark was 21st in the state in value of farm products sold during 1954, with total sales of \$8,584,322. Of this sum, \$6,068,113 was received by producers for livestock and livestock products, eighth highest in Washington. Income per farm is slightly below the state average mainly because of numerous, small, part-time farms which outnumber the larger commercial farms. While secondary to manufacturing, agriculture has played an important part in the expanding population and economy of Clark County.

History 1/

Before settlement by white men in 1825 at Fort Vancouver, the present area of Clark County was a heavily forested wilderness ranged over by the Klickitat Indians. These Indians were related in language and culture to the Yakima, Tenino, Umatilla, Cayuse and Nez Perce tribes who lived along the banks of the Columbia and its tributaries in southern Washington and northern Oregon. In contrast to the more sedentary coast and Puget Sound Indians, the Klickitats

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were horsemen who moved about over large areas. They wintered at fishing sites along southern Washington rivers and spent their summers moving about in the Cascade Mountains and plateaus hunting game and collecting roots and berries. They preferred the more open uplands of the interior to the forested country on the west slope of the Cascades. Although they ranged into Clark County and camped along the Columbia River, they usually lived in the present Klickitat County area of the Columbia River gorge. Their favorite mountain food-gathering area was the Mount Adams district and the valley of the Klickitat River.

The first white men to explore the present Clark County area were the British of the Captain George Vancouver expedition to the Pacific Northwest coast in 1791-92. As part of that exploration a small vessel commanded by Lieutenant William Broughton sailed up the Columbia River in the autumn of 1792. Worried by treacherous sand bars, the British anchored, and by small boat moved to a point a few miles down-river from present Vancouver. A prominent point on the north bank was named Point Vancouver. Later, in 1825, the British gave the name Vancouver to their fur trading post.

American claims to the Columbia River country were strengthened when the Lewis and Clark expedition descended the river in November 1805, and wrote descriptions of the Clark County area in their journals. They camped near the mouth of the Lewis River which heads in Clark County. The county was named after the U.S. Army officer, Captain William Clark of this expedition, when it was later established. The Lewis River was named after Captain Meriwether Lewis.

In 1825, a British fur trading enterprise, the Hudson's Bay Company, organized the first permanent settlement in western Washington when they established Fort Vancouver. At this post, where the present city of Vancouver, Washington, now stands, Dr. John McLoughlin directed fur trading operations throughout the "Oregon Country" then under joint American-British occupation. At the fort the British built storehouses for furs, trading goods and grain, and workshops for blacksmithing, carpentry, barrelmaking and other crafts. Fifty employees--Scots, French Canadians and Indians--lived in the fort. Several hundred acres of farmland were cultivated for hay, grain, fruit and root crops. Cattle and livestock were introduced and the first fruit trees were planted. Wheat and meat were sold for export to the Russians in Alaska.

1/ This historical summary has been derived from three sources:

- (1) Washington, A Guide to the Evergreen State, (American Guide Series), Writers' Program of the Works Project Administration, State of Washington. Sponsored by the Washington State Historical Society, published by Binford and Mort, Portland, Oregon, 1941, pp. 278-282.
- (2) Carl Landerholm, Clark, (County History), pp. 21-26, The Book of Counties, 1953, a publication of the Washington State Associations of County Commissioners and County Engineers in cooperation with The State College of Washington, 1954.
- (3) Perry, Richard M., The Counties of Washington, Olympia, Secretary of State, State of Washington, 1943. (Mimeographed).

Early American immigrants to the Oregon Country also were buyers of grain, meat and seed from the fields surrounding Fort Vancouver. The Hudson's Bay Company farm had a wide influence on the beginnings of agriculture in southwestern Washington and western Oregon.

From 1830 to 1846 there were numerous disputes concerning the settlement of Americans in present Clark County as well as other parts of the territory north of the Columbia River. In spite of resistance by the Hudson's Bay Company, an American, Richard Covington, built a cabin in the early 1840's near Vancouver. Another early American settler, Henry Williamson, was evicted from his land claim by the British. Amos Short was still another American prevented from settling. Domination of the Clark County area by the British was ended by the Treaty of 1846 which established the Oregon Country under American control. In 1848 Fort Vancouver was transferred to the United States and undisputed settlement by Americans on the north bank of the Columbia River was underway.

In 1848 the townsite of Vancouver City was platted by Henry Williamson and later acquired by Amos Short. This community of Americans grew rapidly as settlers arrived over the Oregon Trail. The area was organized into Clark County by the Oregon Territorial government in 1850 and Vancouver became the permanent county seat.

From 1850 to 1890 a large number of land settlers from eastern states and European lands arrived to establish new towns and villages and to clear farms along the banks of the Columbia River and on the foothill bottomlands. German immigrants were quite prominent. Jacob Hunsaker built a sawmill on Lake Lackamas and started settlement in the Camas district. August H. Richter homesteaded at Battleground and was the founder of that town. Jacob Proebstel and his brothers filed donation land claims in the La Camas Creek Valley.

The interior of the county was accessible by boat and steamer traffic on the Lewis River. The old Columbia River terrace lands north of Vancouver had numerous prairies where the Hudson's Bay Company, and later, the U.S. Army, grazed horses and cattle. The land was suited for tree crops and grass and hay farming. At an early date Clark County became noted as a producer of livestock, hay and grain and prunes. The latter fruit was introduced as early as 1829 on the Hudson's Bay Company farm.

Several important developments in county history influenced the nature of farming. In the 1880's the construction of better roads and the building of the Vancouver, Klickitat and Yakima Railroad from Vancouver to the interior of the county encouraged farming by providing easier access to markets. From 1900 to 1910 logging and lumbering expanded at Ridgefield, Vancouver, Camas and Washougal and water transportation to the Portland, Oregon, market was improved. Population doubled during the decade to 26,115 in 1910.

In September 1902, a major forest fire struck the northern hilly part of the county. Known as the Great Lewis River Fire or the Yacolt Burn, over 150,000 acres of timber resources in the county were destroyed by this fire. In the bottom lands of the upper Lewis River 35 settlers lost their lives and several hundred farm settlements along with their livestock were destroyed. The loss of timber later limited the expansion of forest industry work and necessitated a greater reliance on farming.

From 1917 to 1920 the World War I boom provided greater market outlets for the county's agriculture. An interstate bridge over the Columbia River between Vancouver and Portland opened up that large urban market for Clark County dairy, livestock and poultry products. In 1918 the Washington Packing Corporation was formed at Vancouver for marketing prunes. In 1919 the Northwest Cannery Association in Portland began processing Clark County prunes. During World War I, Vancouver Barracks was the headquarters of the Spruce Division and quartered as high as 30,000 troops. This large local market for dairy products, vegetables and fruit stimulated Clark County farmers to specialize more in commercial products and crops.

An important incentive for fruit and specialty-crop farmers was created in 1930 when The Washington Cannery Cooperative was formed. It took over the cannery of the Washington Packing Corporation at Vancouver and expanded its processed foods line to include purple plums, green beans, peaches, pears, apricots, cherries and berries.

The decade 1940-1950 was the major period of expansion for industry and agriculture. Population grew from 49,852 in 1940 to 85,300 in 1955, an increase of 71 percent. More than 10,000 acres of farm land was added during the decade. This growth was caused by shipbuilding in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area during World War II (1941-1945), by the expansion in aluminum ingot production at Vancouver by the Aluminum Company of America, and as a result of larger paper production at Camas by the Crown-Zellerbach Corporation. Served by improved highway and rail transportation, Clark County became a part of the Portland metropolitan area. Today, many inhabitants live on small farms and work full or part-time in the industries of the area. Farmers have been able to specialize in milk, eggs, vegetables and other crops consumed by the large non-farm population living in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area.

The agricultural development of Clark County has been encouraged and guided by several agencies and private enterprises. An important contribution has been made by the Washington State College Southwestern Washington Experiment Station at Vancouver. The County Extension Service, through County Agents based at Vancouver, has provided technical assistance which has improved animal husbandry and horticulture. Dairying has been promoted by the Clark County Dairymen's Cooperative at Battleground and Vancouver. Poultry farming has been advanced by Clark County farm members of the Washington Cooperative Farmers' Association with a plant at Brush Prairie. Fruit and vegetable farming has been greatly influenced by the growers with membership in the Washington Cannery Cooperative with a plant in Vancouver. Being closely adjacent to the well-developed agriculture of the Willamette Valley of Oregon, Clark County farming has been influenced by the organization and marketing work of several Oregon associations. Many Clark farmers became affiliated with the Purple Plum Association, the Blue Lake Green Bean Cannery Association, the Oregon Filbert Growers' Association and the Willamette Valley Prune-Growers' Association.